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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
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INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
IRAN COLLECTIVE
IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

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SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO NEA/ARP FOR SWALKER/BSHUKAN

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2027
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [KNNP](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: GCC ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL FOR POLITICAL
AFFAIR FEARS REGIONAL NUCLEAR ARMS RACE, HAS NO CONFIDENCE
IN IRAQI PM MALIKI

CLASSIFIED BY: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION MICHAEL GFOELLER FOR REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D).

11. (S) SUMMARY. GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) ASSISTANT
SECRETARY GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS DR. ABDULKARIM HAMADI

SIPDIS

TOLD POLOFF ON APRIL 24 THAT HE FEARS A NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN
THE MIDDLE EAST AND IS CONFIDENT THAT IRAN WILL PROCEED WITH
A NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. HE SAID INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE
COULD FORESTALL IRAN'S PLANS, BUT INSISTED U.S. ENGAGEMENT IS
KEY TO ACHIEVING THIS. HAMADI SAID THE GCC'S EFFORTS TO
ESTABLISH A NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES IS NOT IN
RESPONSE TO IRAN'S ACTIVITIES. HAMADI WAS SKEPTICAL OF IRAQI
PM NOURI AL-MALIKI'S ABILITY TO EFFECT A "NATIONAL"
GOVERNMENT AND WAS NOT HOPEFUL THAT THE CURRENT IRAQ

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GOVERNMENT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. HE ENCOURAGED GREATER U.S.
ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAQ'S NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING SYRIA AND IRAN.
END SUMMARY.

12. (S) GCC ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
DR. ABDULKARIM HAMADI TOLD POLOFF ON APRIL 24 THAT THERE IS
GREAT CONCERN WITHIN THE GCC REGARDING IRANS EFFORTS TO
INCREASE ITS REGIONAL "FOOTPRINT," ESPECIALLY IN THE CONTEXT
OF ITS EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR PROGRAM. HE WAS EMPHATIC
THAT THE IRANIANS CANNOT BE TRUSTED, SAYING THEY ROUTINELY
UTILIZE "TAKIYA," LYING THAT IS CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE (IN
SHIA ISLAM) IN THE INTEREST OF SELF-PROTECTION/PRESERVATION.
HE STATED BLUNTLY THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION IRAN WILL
DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS IF THEY ARE ABLE TO DO SO. HE
CONTINUED THAT THE ONLY HOPE OF FORESTALLING THIS DEVELOPMENT
-- WHICH HE CONSIDERS CATASTROPHIC FOR THE REGION -- IS FOR
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO ENGAGE WITH IRAN, NOT ISOLATE
IT. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE U.S. IS KEY TO THIS EFFORT.
WITHOUT U.S. ENGAGEMENT OF IRAN ON NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, HE
INSISTED, IRAN WILL NOT BE CONVINCED TO CEASE ITS ACTIVITIES

13. (S) "IT ONLY TAKES ONE CRAZY PERSON," SAID HAMADI, REFERRING TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A NUCLEAR CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, "SO WE NEED TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT A NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN THE REGION." ALTHOUGH CLEARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY, HE SAID THAT THE THREAT IS NOT IMMINENT BECAUSE IT WOULD TAKE YEARS TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR ARMS CAPABILITY. HE POINTED TO ISRAEL, CLAIMING THAT IT TOOK MANY YEARS FOR IT TO DEVELOP ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR ANY NUCLEAR PROGRAM TO BE CONDUCTED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES, AS WELL AS IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE IAEA. "WE DO NOT WANT A CHERNOBYL HERE," HE STATED.

14. (S) TURNING TO THE GCC'S PLANS TO IMPLEMENT A NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES, HAMADI ARGUED THAT IT IS NOT THE FIRST STEP TOWARD DEVELOPING A NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY. HAMADI REPEATED -- ALMOST VERBATIM -- WHAT SAUDI MFA REPRESENTATIVE FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AMBASSADOR

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HAZIM KARAKOTLY TOLD POLOFF ON APRIL 23 -- THAT IT IS NECESSARY FOR GCC COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP ENERGY ALTERNATIVES AND EMBARKING ON A NUCLEAR PROGRAM IS THE LOGICAL WAY TO DO THAT. BOTH EMPHATICALLY STATED THAT THE DOWN-RANGE DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY BY GCC COUNTRIES IS NOT THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE. KARAKOTLY AND HAMADI POINTED OUT THAT THE GCC AND SAUDI ARABIA ARE CONSULTING CLOSELY WITH THE IAEA ON THIS ISSUE, NOTING THAT IAEA DIRECTOR GENERAL MOHAMMED EL-BARADEI PUBLICLY AND POSITIVELY COMMENTED TO THE SAUDI PRESS ON APRIL 12 ABOUT THESE EFFORTS.

15. (S) HAMADI CONTINUED THAT HE IS SKEPTICAL OF IRAQI PM NOURI AL-MALIKI'S ABILITY TO EFFECT A "NATIONAL" GOVERNMENT, DESCRIBING THE CURRENT IRAQI GOVERNMENT AS "IRANIAN." CALLING THE IRAQ CRISIS A "COMPLICATED SITUATION," HE POINTED TO WHAT HE CALLED A "FLAWED" CONSTITUTION THAT DOES NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECT IRAQ'S MINORITIES, DISPUTES OVER THE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF OIL REVENUES, AND EXCESSIVE IRANIAN INFLUENCE AS KEY FACTORS IN THE ONGOING VIOLENCE. HE STATED THAT THE MALIKI GOVERNMENT CANNOT HAVE ANY CREDIBILITY AS A

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NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT IS SECTARIAN AND MEMBERS OF MILITIA GROUPS HOLD KEY MINISTRY POSITIONS. HE AGREED THAT IT IS REASONABLE FOR THE SHI'A MAJORITY TO BE APPROPRIATELY REPRESENTED IN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IMPLIED THAT THE CURRENT ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF SHI'A VERSUS THE NUMBER OF SUNNIS

IN IRAQ ARE NOT ACCURATE.

16. (S) HAMADI STATED THAT THE GCC WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE CURRENT IRAQI GOVERNMENT SUCCEED, BUT WAS NOT HOPEFUL. HE EMPHASIZED THAT TO SUCCEED, THE IRAQIS NEED ENHANCED DIALOGUE WITH ALL INTERNAL FACTIONS, AS WELL AS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. ADDITIONALLY, SAID HAMADI, THE CONSTITUTION MUST BE REWORKED TO ENSURE ADEQUATE PROTECTIONS FOR IRAQ'S MINORITIES. HE FURTHER INSISTED THAT THE U.S. MUST "COME DOWN HARD" ON THE MALIKI GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE IT IMPLEMENTS A PROGRAM OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, ADDING THAT IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE U.S. TO CONTINUE TO CONSULT WITH IRAQ'S NEIGHBORS. CONTINUING THAT THE U.S. CLEARLY DID NOT HAVE A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE "DEPTH OF CULTURE" OR THE

PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO THE VIEWS OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WOULD BE INVALUABLE IN HELPING TO DETERMINE THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION FOR ADDRESSING IRAQ'S PROBLEMS. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE ENGAGEMENT OF "NEUTRAL PARTIES" IN IRAQ WOULD ALLOW THE U.S. TO STEP BACK. REFERENCING THE IRAQ STUDY GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS, HE INDICATED THAT IRAN AND SYRIA COULD BOTH HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION IN IRAQ. HOWEVER, HE CAUTIONED, THERE NEED TO BE DISCRETE, "STANDALONE" INCENTIVES FOR THEM TO DO SO.

17. (S) COMMENT: KARAKOTLY AND HAMADI ECHOED WHAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM OUR OTHER SAUDI INTERLOCUTORS -- OFFICIALLY AND UNOFFICIALLY -- THAT THERE IS GREAT CONCERN ABOUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR AGENDA. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THE SAG'S OFFICIAL POSITION IS THAT THE GCC'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM WOULD BE ONLY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES, THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT THIS IS THE CASE. BOTH KARAKOTLY AND HAMADI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IRAN'S OVERARCHING OBJECTIVE IS TO ESTABLISH ITSELF AS A REGIONAL SUPERPOWER AND DEVELOPING A

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NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY IS AN OBVIOUS WAY TO DO SO. OFFICIAL INSISTENCE THAT THE GCC COUNTRIES WILL ONLY EMBARK ON A PEACEFUL PROGRAM FAILS TO OBVIATE THE FACT THAT IMPLEMENTING ANY NUCLEAR PROGRAM -- PEACEFUL OR OTHERWISE -- PROVIDES GCC COUNTRIES FAR BETTER "POSITIONAL PARITY" WITH A NUCLEAR-CAPABLE IRAN. END COMMENT.
FRAKER